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TAGS: PGOV KPKO MOPS ASEC CG

SUBJECT: FARDC CHANGES COMMANDERS IN NORTH KIVU AFTER SAKE INCIDENTS

REF: KINSHASA 1812 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: PolOff CBrown, reasons 1.4 b/d.

**¶1.** (C) Summary: The Congolese military (FARDC) has made a series of high-level changes in its leadership in North Kivu province following the November 25-27 fighting in Sake (reflets). The heads of two Integrated Brigades which had performed poorly against pro-Nkunda forces were relieved of command. The FARDC has decided to re-deploy to areas outside the province several units, including the 11th Integrated Brigade, which fled the initial fighting at Sake. End summary.

**¶2.** (C) The FARDC has implemented a major shake-up in its leadership in North Kivu after the fighting in Sake November 25-27. Colonel Paul Mugisa was removed as commander of the 11th Integrated Brigade (IB) and replaced by his deputy, Colonel Aron Nyamushebwa. Colonel Ngumba Ramazani, currently the commander of the 11th Integrated Battalion, has been nominated as the new deputy commander.

**¶3.** (C) According to MONUC military officials, the 11th IB will be transferred to South Kivu province. It performed "miserably" against Nkunda's forces during the Sake fighting, abandoning its positions and looting during its retreat. The FARDC's non-integrated 1st Reserve Brigade, currently stationed in northern South Kivu, will replace the 11th IB and take up positions in Sake.

**¶4.** (C) Col. Janvier Mayanga was removed as commander of the 9th IB, which fought, and fled from, Nkunda loyalists near Rutshuru during the November fighting. FARDC officials alleged Mayanga collaborated frequently with Rwandan Hutu FDLR troops in the area and misappropriated food and rations for his troops, which led to several recent desertions. He was facing possible military justice charges of arresting and torturing a Congolese park ranger in the Virunga Park area in November and arbitrarily arresting two Tutsi FARDC officers for "colluding" with Nkunda.

**¶5.** (C) The new 11th IB commander is Colonel Smith Gihanga of the non-integrated 81st Brigade, elements of which had fought on the Nkunda side in Sake. According to MONUC officials, Gihanga, who claims to be of both Hutu and Tutsi background, is not loyal to Nkunda and is known for his "moderate" views. Gihanga was a member of the Rwandan-funded Congolese National Army (ANC), the former military wing of the Rally for Congolese Democracy (RCD). His command of the 81st had effectively been usurped by Nkunda loyalists while he was in Kinshasa in early November. Gihanga told MONUC officials just before the fighting in Sake that he was willing to be integrated into the FARDC and pledged that many of his troops would follow him.

¶ 6. (C) The FARDC's non-integrated 116th Brigade from South Kivu will be re-deployed to Sake in North Kivu and placed under the regional military command. The 116th is commanded by a Colonel Padiri, another former ANC officer. Padiri reportedly fought against pro-Nkunda troops trying to enter South Kivu in September 2004. Several dozen presumed pro-Nkunda soldiers from the 116th have reportedly defected to Nkunda's side in the past two weeks.

¶ 7. (C) North Kivu province, which constitutes the FARDC's 8th Military Region, is now commanded by General Louis Ngizo, also a former ANC officer. Ngizo assumed his position in Goma November 23, the day before fighting began in Sake. He was previously the deputy commander of the 6th Military Region (Katanga) and the deputy commander of the 10th Military Region (South Kivu). Colonel Delphin Kahimbi, a former Congolese Armed Forces (FAC) officer, is the new deputy commander of operations and intelligence for North Kivu. Kahimi had recently been assigned to Kinshasa.

¶ 8. (C) Comment: These changes are a sign that the Congolese leadership is taking seriously the abysmal performance of FARDC troops in the fighting around Sake. Whether having a different set of commanders in place will substantially change things is another question. Training, supplies, logistics, and -- above all -- professionalism will remain conspicuous deficiencies in the military for the foreseeable future. End comment.

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